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Flash Back

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FLASHBACK

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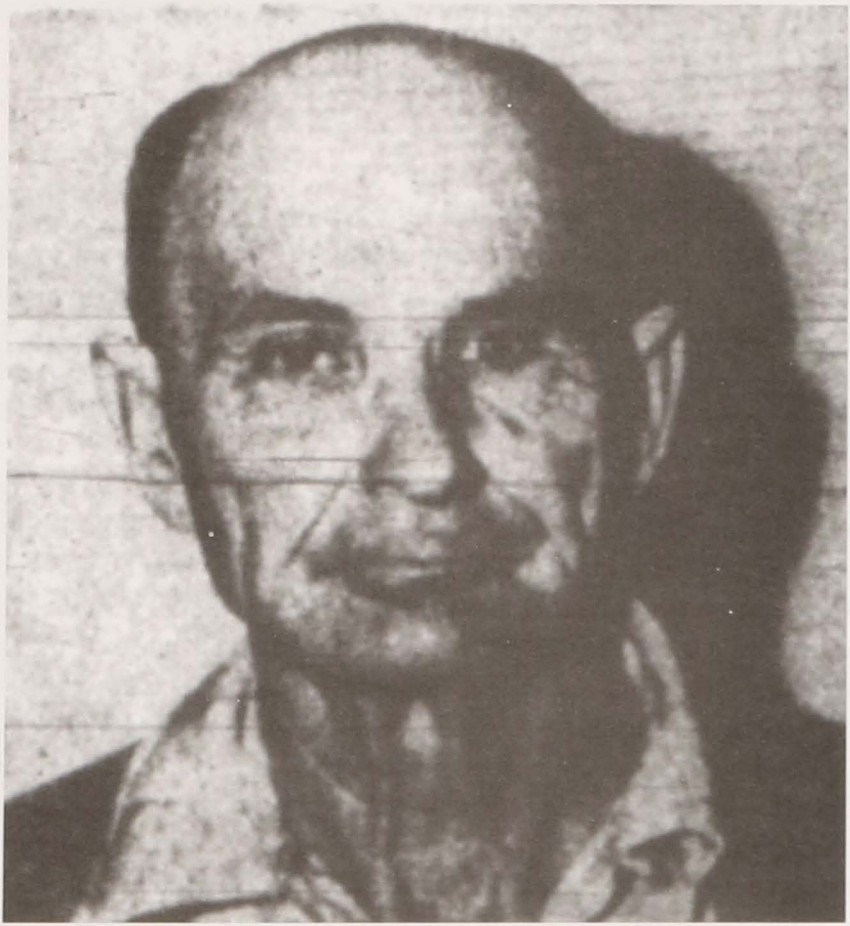
Cover: Francis Schmidt, basketball coach at the University of Arkansas from 1922-1929. Schmidt was one of the leading proponents of an indoor gymnasium for the school athletic teams. *(From The 1924* Razorback*; Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries)*



Charles Friddle
From: Northwest Arkansas Times, *December 5, 1955*

"A MOST UNUSUAL SHOOTING"

For Chester Goss, the morning had started normally enough. After finishing his night shift at Yellow Cab, located just below the square at 44 N. Block Street, Goss walked the short block to the Bus Station Café (situated then on the northwest corner of Meadow and College), one of the few places in town that a man could get a cup of coffee early on a Sunday morning.

Goss met his friend Ed Wilcox at the café where the two men had a casual chat while enjoying their coffee. Neither could have suspected that within the next half hour Goss would lie on a Fayetteville sidewalk, mortally wounded.

The only hint of potential trouble, though it was not recognized as such by either Goss or Wilcox at the time, was that Charles Friddle came into the café while the men were having their coffee. Friddle did nothing in particular to draw attention to himself and as Goss would describe later, the soon to be assailant simply made a "pass through the restaurant."

According to accounts in the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, a little before 9:30 a.m., Goss and Wilcox paid for their coffee and left the Bus Station Café. Outside, they turned left, walking on the sidewalk beside busy College Avenue. College was particularly busy at this time of day on Sundays as local worshipers arrived in droves to attend one of three churches in the near vicinity of the corner of College and Dickson Street. Apparently unaware that Charles Friddle was now following them, Goss and Wilcox made their way up to the corner.

At the southwest corner of the intersection, in front of Maeder's Lion Service Station (in later years the longtime location of Jerry's Restaurant), the two men parted company. Wilcox headed west down Dickson, while Goss waited for a chance to cross the busy intersection to the east. The dispatcher, a bachelor, lived a short distance away, at 229 E. Dickson Street, with his mother.

Having just completed a night shift, the fifty-six year old man was surely looking forward to getting some rest. There was still no indication that Goss knew Friddle had been stalking him and that the sixty-six year old "unemployed restaurant worker" was close behind, with a .22 caliber revolver in his hand.

At 9:30 a.m., with church services imminent, Charles Friddle raised the revolver and fired one shot, hitting Chester Goss square in the back. Due to the noise of automobile traffic, witnesses did not seem to hear the

The imposing main entrance to the Arkansas State Hospital in Little Rock, where Charles Friddle was committed after his murder of Chester Goss, ca. 1940.

report of the small caliber weapon. Across the street from Friddle, however, Chester Goss fell in a heap just as his foot touched the other sidewalk. As he dropped, Goss saw Friddle back across the street "with a smoking pistol in his hand."

Church-goers at the First Baptist Church, diagonally across College from where Goss fell, thought the cab dispatcher must have taken ill, perhaps had a heart attack. Rushing to the injured man's side, the witnesses quickly ascertained the real nature of Goss's wounds and called police. While attention was centered on the stricken man, Charles Friddle calmly walked away – heading west, towards the nearby home of his divorced wife.

Within minutes, the fallen Goss was whisked away from the scene and, as a veteran of World War I, taken to the Veterans Administration Hospital on North College. Doctors there soon realized the gravity of Goss' wound. Even though the respected member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion had been shot with a light caliber pistol, the bullet had been more destructive than might have been expected.

The doctors discovered that the .22 round that had entered Goss' back had damaged his spinal column before lodging in his abdomen. As a result of the spinal injury, Goss was, at least temporarily, paralyzed from the waist down. Additionally, the taxi dispatcher suffered a collapsed lung and other unspecified "internal injuries."

Back in town, just moments after the shooting, Charles Friddle arrived at the nearby home of his ex-wife, Mrs. Mabel Villines, a cook at the University of Arkansas, and their two daughters. Friddle asked one of his daughters, Miss Thelma Friddle, a 1953 graduate of Fayetteville High School and a clerk at the Scott Five and Ten Cent Store on the east side of the square, to call a cab for him and shocked the young woman by telling her that he had "just shot a man."

Miss Friddle tried to get a Checker Cab for her father but when the line was busy she called for a Yellow Cab. In one of the extreme ironies of the case, Charles Friddle was driven home – to the house he shared on Wood Street with a man named Bill Gibson – in a cab owned by the company that employed the man he had shot down not a quarter of an hour before. When Friddle left his ex-wife's house, Mrs. Villines reported his behavior and conversation to the police.

By 9:45 a.m, the *Times* reported Friddle was back home where, to Gibson, he appeared agitated and confessed for the second time in a

quarter of an hour that he, Friddle, had "just shot a man." Friddle also took the extraordinary measure of warning Gibson "not to be nervous" if the police arrived. At this time, Friddle apparently hid the discharged pistol beneath the mattress of his own bed.

For the next few hours, while VA doctors treated the gunshot victim, Friddle kept out of sight. But around 1:00 p.m., Washington County Sheriff Bruce Crider, accompanied by unnamed deputies and members of the Fayetteville Police Department, descended upon the Gibson-Friddle residence.

Sheriff Crider found both men at home and after a search of the house discovered a recently fired .22 caliber revolver, with one round missing from its cylinder, under the suspect's bed. Friddle offered no resistance when Sheriff Crider put him under arrest but denied shooting Goss. The authorities took a signed statement from Gibson and booked Friddle into jail.

Later in the afternoon, Sheriff Crider and Pearl Watts went to the VA Hospital, where they interviewed Chester Goss. At that time, the severely wounded man identified Friddle as his assailant, indicating that he knew him only by sight, but was unable to think of any logical reason for the attack.

The Monday, December 5, 1955 issue of the *Times* reported two significant events in the dramatic case. In the afternoon, Deputy Prosecutor Leonard Greenhaw filed a charge of assault with intent to kill in circuit court against Friddle. Earlier, the paper noted, doctors at the VA Hospital had operated on Chester Goss to both repair his gunshot wound and to relieve the pressure on his spinal column, which was believed to be the cause of Goss' paralysis. After the surgery, Goss was said to be "showing continued improvement."

The following day, the *Times* reported that Friddle still denied shooting Goss but, nonetheless, told Sheriff Crider and Deputy Prosecutor Greenhaw that he "would have shot Goss five years ago" had he been able to obtain a permit to carry a pistol. The *Times* noted that at the time Arkansas had "no law relative to pistol permits."

Sheriff Crider added that, despite the continued denial of wrongdoing, Friddle gave what amounted to his motive for doing so. While indicating, as Goss had before, that he knew the victim "only by sight," Friddle explained that people had been "shooting holes in his house" with "television

rays." He apparently believed, Crider noted, that Goss was the head of a "gang" shooting these rays at Friddle.

Two days after Friddle's conversation with authorities, on Thursday, December 8, 1955, his defense attorney, John W. Murphy, entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity. Circuit Court Judge Maupin Cummings accepted the plea and after briefly questioning Friddle set his bond at $5,000. The judge also tentatively set a trial date for January 17, 1956, and ordered Friddle sent to the "state Mental Hospital at Little Rock" for a thirty-day period of observation.

One can only imagine how Friddle's comments were received at the time. His reasons for the shooting seem oddly contemporary, though the events occurred over fifty years ago. They do so because the crime, as was pointed out at the time, made no sense whatsoever. It was not done for revenge, nor passion; it was not even committed for economic gain. While subsequent evaluations would label Friddle insane, his crime of half a century ago has a strange, surreal quality of dissociation, alienation, and separation from reality that is a hallmark of much of the crime of our post-modern, urban society.

A week passed before the *Times* updated the story. On Thursday, December 15, 1955, Chester Goss was reported to be making "fair progress" at the VA Hospital. It would be the last good news in the case. The following Tuesday, December 20, 1955, after lingering sixteen long days, Chester Goss died. The next day, first-degree murder charges were filed against Charles Friddle, who was described as "undergoing" a thirty-day period of observation at the "state Hospital for Mental Diseases at Little Rock."

Funeral services for Chester Goss, conducted by Reverend Marius J. Lindloff, were held in the chapel of Nelson's Funeral Home at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, December 23, 1955. Goss, as a war veteran, was buried in the National Cemetery in south Fayetteville. His obituary appeared in the *Times* on Monday, December 26, 1955. Chester Lee Goss was born in Fayetteville on July 29, 1899. He was survived by his mother, a brother, and three nephews.

As for the man who killed Chester Goss, there was no word until January 11, 1956, when the *Times* ran the headline "George [sic] Friddle Reported To Be 'With Psychosis'." According to the story, Friddle had been "found insane by a State Hospital examining board."

"Normally," the story went on, "persons charged with murder and later found to be insane, are committed to the State Hospital by order of the Circuit Court. They must remain in the hospital until they recover, which frequently means for life." Friddle's condition, as reported by Dr. W. P. Kolb in a letter to Judge Cummings stated unequivocally that Friddle was insane.

Friddle's condition was diagnosed, the report concluded as "schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type." The board recommended Friddle "be committed to the hospital under the terms of Act 241 of 1943." Judge Cummings himself was quoted as saying that Friddle would "probably be committed permanently."

Charles Friddle, the unobtrusive man who once sat calmly in my family's living room and who later shot and killed the unsuspecting Chester Goss for reasons considered completely "insane", may well have spent the rest of his life at the state mental hospital. No obituary was found for him in local records, and no other mention of him has surfaced. After more than fifty years, this case, so strange in its motives and yet sadly compelling, has receded almost from sight into the mists of long forgotten Fayetteville history.[1]

Footnotes

[1] *Northwest Arkansas Times*, December 5, 6, 8, 15, 20, 21, 22, and 26, 1955 and January 11, 1956. Quotations and details of the case are from the newspaper, chronological sequencing, summary, and narrative by the author.

THE GOLDEN ERA OF RAZORBACK BASKETBALL

by Don E. Schaefer*

Few people are alive today who remember the "Golden Era of Razorback Basketball." No, this reference is not to the NCAA champion basketball team of 1994, when 20,000 fans packed out Bud Walton Arena for every game. Those were great times, but they don't compare to the early University of Arkansas basketball teams who got "to come in out of the cold" and play their first basketball game indoors. This "Golden Era" spanned the years 1923 to 1937 or 15 seasons. During that time the basketball team won 260 games, lost 76; and earned six Southwest Conference titles.

To get a real feel for these accomplishments, we must go back to the beginning.

A little over 100 years ago, the University's administration had plans for more outdoor recreational space for students and also plans for a gymnasium for intercollegiate competition. The UA Board of Trustees in 1902 requested that all the farm buildings be moved west of Garland Avenue and asked that the Athletic Association be allowed to extend into the area formerly occupied by those buildings. This area, east of Garland, would be the location of University athletics for the next 35 years. In 1905, when requests were made to the Arkansas Legislature for funding of several University buildings, a gymnasium was among them. It was not one of the six approved, and State Senator Thomas C. Jobe, who represented Hempstead and Nevada counties, moved to eliminate the gymnasium and said, "there was plenty of room for exercise outside."

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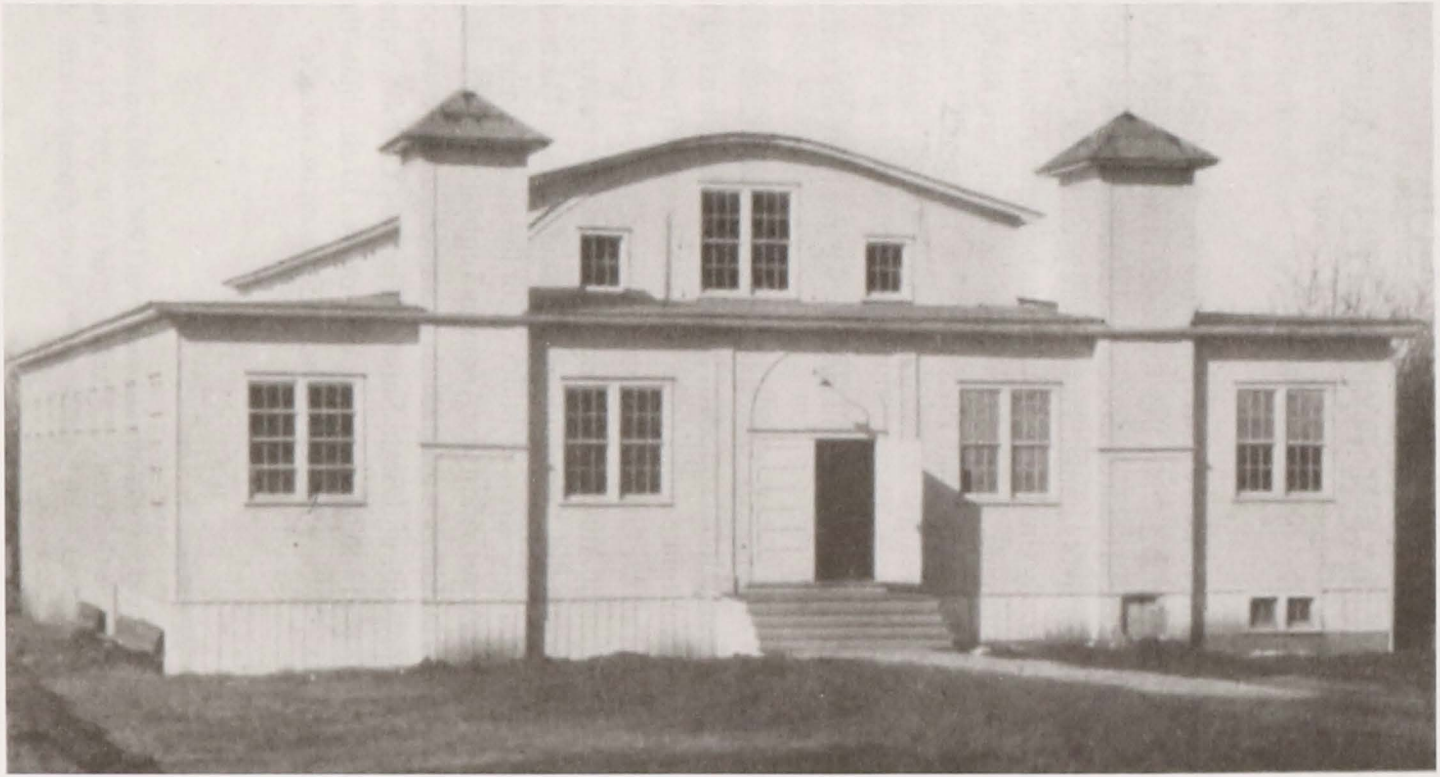
*Don E. Schaefer served as editor of *Flashback* from 1995-2000 and assistant director of information at the University of Arkansas from 1970-1995. He is a frequent contributor to *Flashback*, with his most recent article appearing in the autumn 2006 issue.



The new University of Arkansas gymnasium, affectionately known as "Schmidt's Barn," 1924.

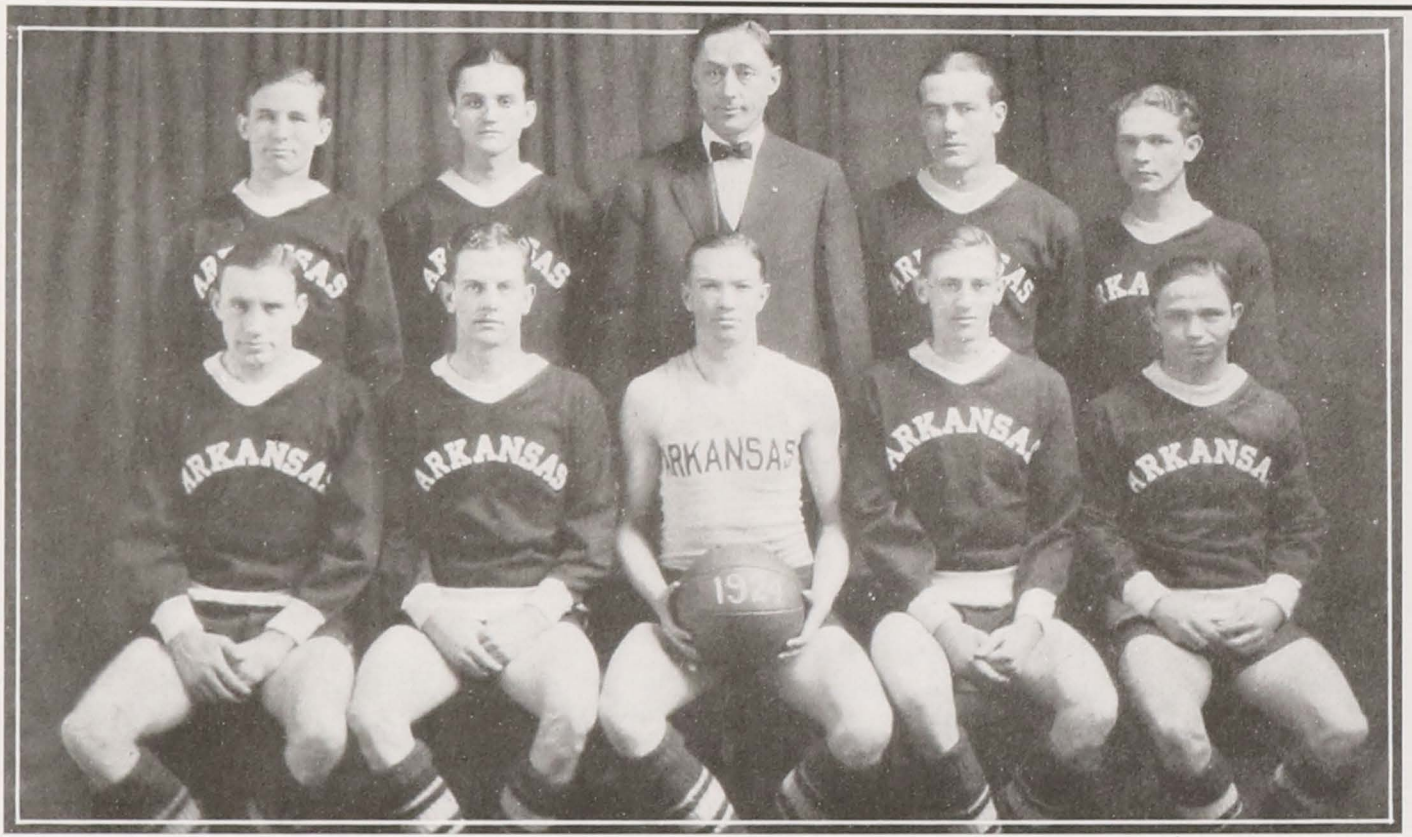
From: The 1924 Razorback

This outdoor space was where basketball was played and the women's teams were more successful than the men's. In the 1909-10 season the women from the University of Arkansas defeated Mississippi State College for Women in the "championship of the South." Subsequently, they accepted a challenge to play in a national championship game that would be the equivalent of today's NCAA finals. University President John Tillman stopped them from going, saying it would put too much emphasis on athletics. The women played no more games for many years.

In 1911-13 there was an unsuccessful campaign by Coach Hugo Bezdek to raise private money for a gymnasium. A similar campaign in 1923 by Coach Francis Schmidt was successful, initiated with a $1,500 gift from Jay Fulbright, father of J. William Fulbright. The Arkansas Booster Club was able to raise the remaining $5,000. An old garage and automobile showroom was being torn down in Fayetteville that had eight 48-foot steel girders, which could be used as roof supports for the new gym, and they were purchased for a few hundred dollars. The building was 115 feet long and 80 feet wide and was of frame construction, except for the steel girders. The 48-foot width of the beams provided the open space over the playing floor and shed roofs extended the building on each side for the bleachers. This allowed for a 90 x 40 foot basketball court. (Regulation basketball courts are 94 x 50 feet.) The building initially seated 1,000 spectators and was expanded later with a shed roof on the west end. The lockers, dressing rooms, and store rooms were located in the basement. The gym faced east and had an entrance, coach's office, and ticket booth at that end. The court's length ran east and west. The cost was said to be $10,000 after the gym was completed. At last, there was a place to play basketball indoors!

A dedication was held December 6, 1923. The gym, constructed about where the Arkansas Union on the east side of Garland is now located, was dubbed "Schmidt's Barn" in honor of their coach at the time, Francis Schmidt. Inter-collegiate basketball for men at the University of Arkansas had its birth in this temporary frame building. Although crowded, uncomfortable, drafty, and cold, the new gymnasium was the home of Razorback basketball during the "Golden Era."

During the next 70 years the Razorback basketball program would be upgraded three times to newer, bigger, and better facilities, but there was nothing to compare with going from outdoors to indoors.



The 1923-1924 University of Arkansas baseketball team, the first to play in the new gymnasium.

From: The 1924 Razorback

The first season of 1923-24 the team won 17 games and lost 11. Their conference record was 3-9 and put them in seventh place that first year. The next year they bettered their record to 21-5 and finished in third place in the Southwest Conference. The third year the team earned their first Southwest Conference championship—something they repeated for the next four years. In 1935-36 in the team went 24-3, won the conference championship, and came within one game of representing the United States in the 1936 Olympics. They lost the final game in the Olympic playoffs to Hollywood Universal.

This 15-season era produced many basketball greats. Six of them earned All-American honors. They were Glen Rose in 1928, Tom Pickell and Gene Lambert in 1929, Wear Schoonover in 1930 (also the first Razorback to be all-American in football), James "Doc" Sexton in 1931 and 1932, and Ike Poole in 1936.

A new field house (now the University Museum building) was erected across Garland, a few hundred feet north of Schmidt's gymnasium, before the fall semester of 1937. The old gymnasium was sold to the Fayetteville Public Schools. Salvage work began on its removal in March of 1939 after the state high school basketball tournament was held there that year. It was moved to the Fayetteville High School campus on School Street where the building was faced with stone and renamed Root Auditorium. The high school basketball teams used it until the new high school was built on Stone Street. This building burned May 13, 1970.

The old building, Schmidt's Barn, had a special place in the history of University of Arkansas athletics. It may have been crowded and drafty. It had a basketball court less than regulation size. But it was the first place those basketball players could prove to themselves and to the world that they could compete with anybody. Part of the "Golden Era," they were the foundation of teams to come.

The Season

Clifford Blackburn

At the close of the football season, Coach Schmidt issued the call for basketball material. Fourteen men reported at the new Schmidt Gymnasium as candidates for Arkansas' first Varsity Basketball team.

Strenuous daily practice followed throughout the month of December until the end of the first quarter. During the Christmas vacation the team went on an extended tour over the state. The club won six and lost two of the games played on the trip. The team was weakened considerably by the loss of Capt. Chas. Corgan, who was declared ineligible.

The experience on the tour welded the team into a fairly good machine and the two games at Fayettville, December the 4th and 5th, were won easily from the Tahlequah Normal by a score of 19 to 13 and 33 to 12 respectively. The Arkansas State Normal was next in line to accept a defeat of 43 to 22 and 42 to 14.

The Southwestern State Normal of Springfield, State Champions, invaded the Razorback land and lost one game to the Arkansas Club. Cy King, one of Schmidt's speedy forwards, won the last game with a sensational field goal the last minute of the game. 22 and 21 are scores that tell the tale.

On Friday of the next week found Arkansas against. S.M.U. on the first Razorback conference game. S.M.U. nosed out ahead the first night with a score of 17 to 11 but were outplayed very much the second night when the Razorbacks stacked up the score of 21 to 15.

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*Clifford Blackburn played varsity guard for the 1923-1924 Razorback basketball team. He wrote this summary of the 1923-1924 season for the 1924 *Razorback* yearbook.

T.C.U., the next invader, arrived in Fayetteville with rabbit's feet in their pockets and managed to carry away both games with the scores of 32 to 31 and 23 to 21, respectively.

The Razorbacks defeated the Hendrix Bulldogs and after a week's rest journeyed to Baylor for the first game of the Texas invasion. The Bears took the first game to the tune of 33 to 29. The second night Arkansas opened upon the Baylor bunch and played them off their feet to the score of 28 to 14.

College Station was the next stop, where two games were lost to the strong Texas A. and M. club, 35 to 29 and 32 to 17. Darby, the sensational A. and M. forward, showed his best form in these games.

The Rice Owls put up a brilliant fight and stopped the Razorbacks by winning a game 30 to 19 the first night at Houston. The second game ended differently as the Arkansas gang came back with oodles of fight and won the game 29 to 22. The Razorbacks then journeyed back to Fayetteville to meet Texas University the following Friday. The Texas game was the most thrilling clash of the season. The Razorbacks were the only team that had successfully penetrated the Texas defense. The lack of reserves lost the game for the Razorbacks.

BOOK REVIEW

Fifteen Years in the Basement of Old Main, by Walter J. Lemke (Washington County Historical Society, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1943. Dedication and introduction by Lemke, with drawings provided by author. Pp. 85. $20.00)

Fifteen Years in the Basement of Old Main is a telling compilation of reminiscences about former students and events from the early career of long time Journalism Professor Walter J. Lemke. Lemke begins his reminiscences when he first came to the University of Arkansas in 1928 from Chicago after he had been hired by University of Arkansas President John C. Futrall. Lemke was to preside over the *News Bureau* and teach journalism courses, at that time the journalism program was apart of the English department.

According to Lemke's own words, this book grew out of an occasional news letter the he put together and sent to former U of A journalism students. After the onset of World War II, and the loss of several of his students to military enrollment, he expanded this news letter into a regular every other week *Army Letter*. The content of this new letter consisted of submissions from former students serving in various military roles and locations across the world. Lemke admits that part of the reasoning for the reminiscences on the past was his need to have enough words to fill his news letters, and he does provide some very revealing ones.

In Lemke's reminiscences, we learn about his journalism students and the work he did to develop and expand journalism both at the high school and university levels throughout Arkansas. Lemke recounts several little stories of his journalism students. One such student was Mrs. J. M. Hamilton, a freshman in journalism in 1929 as well as being a great-grandmother. Mrs. Hamilton, after she had raised a large family and saw that they were all grown and situated in life "decided that life begins at 70." Mrs. Hamilton not only received nation-wide publicity from the

Associated Press for this, but according to Lemke some 12 years later she was still writing feature articles for the *Arkansas Gazette* in Little Rock and still found of her old journalism instructor as well as being one of his neighbors.

Not long after Lemke arrived on campus he was able to convince President Futrall to allow Journalism to move to the north part of the basement of Old Main in the area that had been used as the armory. As well as equipping the new living quarters of the department with needed typewriters and tables while President Futrall was on vacation. This physical relocation of the journalism program aided in its formation as a separate academic department at the U of A. June 1932 was a milestone, for this was when the first group of students graduated from the Department of Journalism at the U of A. Lemke recounts that the first graduate to have a BA with a major in journalism was Mac Anderson, and he was the first simply because "his name began with an 'A'."

Lemke provides interesting glimpses of university life at the U of A from the late 20's to early 40's. Events included encounters journalism students had with Dean Ripley, the U of A Dean of Men, over smoking in the main building and the content of their publications, to journalism students stirring the pot of hot-topic issues on campus from the editorial pages, which is still done today. As well as Lemke taking his students around the state to different newspapers so that they can both practice there craft and be shown for their abilities.

This book provides priceless snapshots of life in Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas. The author relates a story of his first Sunday in Arkansas where he, along with Ken Hewins, his assistant in the News Bureau, and Hewin's wife, took a drive to "that magnificent vista south of Winslow" known as Mount Gaylor. "Highway 71 wasn't paved then. It was narrow, rocky, and had many sharp turns. The ride was interesting and the scenery overwhelming. To one who had just escaped from Chicago, it was like a breath of heaven."

One Fayetteville landmark that was mentioned several times was the Majestic Café, owned by George Pappas, known today in Fayetteville as *George's Majestic Lounge* or just *George's*. According to Lemke, the Majestic Café was "then as now headquarters for the pseudo-intelligentsia of the journalism department." No one knows how *George's* ranks today with the journalism department, but it still is a favorite place for U of A

students. The Majestic Café was such a regular second home for journalism students, not to mention faculty, that according to Lemke, the proprietor, Mr. Pappas once claimed that he was a member of the Associated Press.

There is a definite uniting theme throughout this entire work, that of Lemke's genuine pride and loving kindness for all of his journalism students. The time and care that he took to correspond with students after they left the university, his news letters which kept all informed of what was going on with the departments students and graduates is a characteristic seldom seen by college faculty now. This work is an invaluable resource of information on student life at the university as well as what several alumni have done in there lives and professional careers.

Lemke's closing paragraph is one of a proud teacher and father figure to the University of Arkansas' Journalism department which now bares his name. "The basement of Old Main! Cool and dim—and heart-warming. Bright with student laughter. Filled with memories. Let who will sing the glory of ivied North Tower. To the journalists Old Main means the basement, with a littler of newspapers and clattering typewriters and a class gathered around the long table in spirited argument. There's the bell!"

—Garrick D. Hildebrand

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